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ABSTRACT

The author considers the issues of linguistic diversity (distribution of variation within communities) and linguistic distance (degree of variation between varieties within a system or between variety systems). He seeks to emphasize the usefulness for further development of distance studies of the concept of language area (Sprachbund), the necessity of its extension to include non-langue components of communicative systems, and the necessity to consider various types of constraints on distance. The author also proposes the concepts of linguistic union and communicative style. (Author/VM)

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TOWARD A MODEL OF LINGUISTIC DISTANCE[1]

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The study of linguistic variation has so far mainly been focussed upon variation within linguistic communities. Little theoretical attention has been paid to variation between and across communities, and problems of DIVERSITY (distribution of variation within communities) have commonly been given precedence over problems of DISTANCE (degree of variation between varieties within a system or between variety systems).[2]

In this note, I wish to point out (1) the usefulness for further development of distance studies of the concept of language area (Sprachbund), (2) the necessity of its extension to include non-langue components of communicative systems, (3) the necessity to consider various types of constraints on distance, and (4) to newly propose the concepts of linguistic union and communicative style.

LANGUAGE AREA (SPRACHBUND) AND SPEECH AREA (SPRECHBUND)

The fact that historically unrelated languages spoken in the same geographical area may exhibit grammatical (syntactic, lexical, phonological) correspondences was recorded in modern linguistics and anthropology early in this century, for instance, by Kroeber, Jespersen, Boas and Sapir.[3] As two representative terms employed to account for this fact 'Sprachbund' can be given for Europe,[4] and 'linguistic area' for American linguistics.[5]

However in structural linguistics the topic remained a peripheral one and despite occasional attention (Martinet et al. 1956) has not been theoretically further developed.

Within the framework of contemporary (socio)linguistics it is necessary to note that areal resemblances are found not merely in the central part of the system of linguistic competence (i.e. in grammar), but also on its periphery. In other words, areal isoglosses cut across the whole sphere of the 'communicative competence' (Hymes, unpublished). An interesting allusion in this direction, to my knowledge never expanded, has already been made in the 1929 Thèses of the Prague Linguistic Circle. 'Il faut étudier systématiquement les gestes... qui one de l'importance pour le problème des alliances régionales linguistiques (p. ex. gestes balcaniques communs),' (Thèses 1929:12). Although based on the undifferentiated concept of 'language', a strong plea for a wide understanding of Sprachbund has been presented by H. Becker. While remaining on the programmatic level he suggested the inclusion of stylistic features such as voice quality, poetic rules, the structure of drama, structure of some speech acts such as the sermon, etc. (1948:76). Stimuli of this type are meaningful in suggesting that should we acknowledge the idea of LANGUAGE AREAS (Sprachbund), we are obliged to accept also SPEECH AREAS (Sprechbund) (cf. Neustupný 1969.57), and COMMUNICATION AREAS in general.

Future development of (socio)linguistics will undoubtedly provide evidence that most of the national and less extensive linguistic communities should also be studied from the point of view of distance as language, speech and communication areas in the proposed sense.

The concepts seem to be, however, primarily relevant for the study of distance across boundaries of small or medium size communities. Already grammatical areal resemblances render considerable assistance

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in language acquisition and language use in bilingual situations. More than by grammar, communication seems, however, to be facilitated in such instances by resemblances in the more peripheral parts of communicative competence (speech and nonverbal communication systems) personnel rules, channel rules, message form rules, thematic rules, variety selection rules, etc. (for systematization cf. Hymes 1962, 1964, 1967). For instance German is easy for a native speaker of Czech not merely because of the large scale lexical (mostly areal) resemblances, but mainly because he knows **WHEN, WHAT,** and **HOW** his German interlocutor would communicate. The same Czech speaker will find French much less perspicuous, and an English speech situation may represent an anagram for him even if, due to school education, his French or English grammatical competence may be of a considerably higher level than his knowledge of the German grammar. The popular Czech belief of widely distributed fluency in German within the community seems to mean little more than a reflection of the experience of successful communication even in instances when the actual knowledge of German grammar is minimal. Similarly, an Australian aboriginal may 'speak' to another aboriginal, even if their languages are mutually unintelligible, due to the areal isoglosses in the periphery of their communicative competence. On the other hand, a native speaker of an Indian language will be a handicapped participant in a group of Europeans, however excellent his grammatical competence in English may be, unless he has acquired the non-grammatical components of the European Sprachbund.

OTHER TYPES OF CONSTRAINTS ON LINGUISTIC DISTANCE

In my opinion it is useful to restrict, in accordance with the main stream of Sprachbund studies, the term 'areal' to a fairly limited category of constraints,

and distinguish in synchronic accounts of distance between areal, accidental, genetic, interferential, typological and sociolinguistic resemblances. The suggested typology represents an attempt to define these categories on the level of synchronic description while keeping them in maximum accordance with a similar classification on a diachronic level.

The meaning given to the term 'areal' will be clear from comparison with the accidental, genetic, and interferential types, which although very closely related, still in typical cases can be separated.

1. Accidental resemblances

Accidental resemblances can be defined by the feature [accidentality], i.e. as isolated isoglosses which never connect more than two systems. Diachronically speaking, along with more chance these isoglosses may reflect distant genetic relationship, an isolated case of interference in which consciousness about the interference was lost, a feature due to areal diffusion limited to one pair of languages only, etc.

2. Genetic resemblances

The proposition that genetic resemblances can be defined on a purely synchronical basis might be faced with hesitation. However, there are obvious examples which are easy to classify as genetic, e.g., the distance among the Scandinavian languages (Haugen 1966), between Czech and Polish, Standard Japanese and the Ryukyu dialects. Apparently the feature which synchronically distinguishes these from the other categories is [comprehensiveness], i.e. multiple and obvious similarities within all subsystems of grammar (syntax, lexicon, phonology). When the number of obvious

correspondences decreases, genetic resemblances can not be distinguished from the accidental and, if distributed contiguously, from the areal constraints on distance.

3. Interferential resemblances

Interferential resemblances are distinguished from other types of similarity by a semtic feature [foreignness]. the order of names when 'surname' precedes the 'first name' bears in Czech, at least for some speakers, the feature [German, official style] the Graeco Roman vocabulary in many European languages carries the feature [Classical, learned style], etc. However, the meaningfulness of an interferential resemblance can be weakened or lost altogether (most of the Czech translation loans from German) in which case on the synchronic level the distinction between interferential and accidental or interferential and areal is lost. Occasionally interference can be of such magnitude that the loss of meaningfulness may result in obscuring the synchronic distinction between interference and genetic relationship.

4. Areal resemblances

Areally determined similarities are negatively marked on all the three features of [accidentality], [comprehensiveness], and [foreignness]: an areal resemblance must connect at least three contiguous systems[6] (Birbaum 1968-71), the number of areal resemblances is rather limited; and the elements concerned are not marked as foreign. An isogloss which fulfils these requirements is, for instance, the European TU/VOUS. it is not accidental because the number of languages which share this feature is certainly more than two (French, Czech, Swedish...); it is not comprehensive because it is not paralleled in the same language by a large number of other representative

resemblances; and it is certainly not interpreted by speakers as a foreign element borrowed from a particular language.

Historically, many areal resemblances are resemblances of other types which have lost their features. Some of the areal resemblances, may however, never have been anything else than areal features (e.g., the Balkanic or New Guinea grammatical resemblances, cf. Sandfeld 1930, Wurm 1956).

5. Typological resemblances

Typological resemblances affect primarily the centre of communicative competence. Under the term 'typology' I understand those grammatical typologies which are not satisfied with classifying languages, but attempt to identify whole sets of mutually related grammatical features[7]. Such sets can be said to manifest a grammatical common denominator, or type, and any language can be viewed as employing one or more from a small universal inventory of such types. Languages with strong agglutinative principle are for instance characterised by strongly independent morphemes, less clear words, one declension paradigm, each grammatical meaning expressed by a separate morpheme etc. (Skalička 1935a, 1966). These languages are 'consonantal' (Skalička 1964), their consonants are well organized into regular systems in which sequences (affricates, palatalized, aspirated, gemminated consonants) are not easily divisible into segments (Neustupný 1966a). Syntactically the agglutinative principle implies the object + verb order a a number of other related characteristics (cf. Lehmann, forthcoming). The corresponding graphical systems are likely to employ widely the morphemic principle; in poetry, rhyme is not easy to establish as a general rule (Neustupný 1962), etc.

Languages which are connected by typological resemblances are not necessarily historically related or geographically close to each other. One remarkably similar pair of languages is for instance Japanese and Hindi.[8] However the type itself is often areally distributed, a fact well known from Eurasia (agglutination) or Western Europe (isolation).

6. Sociolinguistic resemblances

Sociolinguistic similarities, contrary to the typological ones, bear primary importance for the more peripheral subsystems of communicative competence. A large number of coincidences in topical systems, systems of networks, features like particularism in speech, etc. are motivated (determined) by identical features of the social structure. For instance, the occurrence of contact topics in conversational openings (establishing of contact by searching for common acquaintances, experience, etc.) is motivated by the character of social group in the communities concerned. This motivation is the feature by which sociolinguistic similarities can be distinguished from the socially unmotivated areal and other constraints on distance.

THE CONCEPT OF LINGUISTIC UNIONS

It is undoubtedly meaningful to consider the types of distance as separate terms and to speak, for instance, of speech areas, grammatical types, sociolinguistic types etc. There are however strong reasons to believe that the six types of constraints on linguistic distance should normally not be seen as operating separately from each other. Namely

1. As noticed above, it is often difficult to decide which of two types of similarity is involved.

2. It is common, or perhaps even usual, that a single isogloss can be attributed to more than a single type of distance. The presence of the complicated system of honorifics both in Japanese and Javanese can, for instance, be attributed to at least the following factors:

(a) Areal similarity (honorific systems of this type seem to be frequent in the Pacific area).

(b) Typological similarity (honorifics seem to be more easily developed in languages with types similar to Japanese or Javanese than in languages like English or Russian, cf. Neustupný 1968:416).

(c) Sociolinguistic similarity (both Japan and Java are characterized by well established hierarchial social systems).

(3) All types of similarity seem to cooccur in cases such as Western Europe, India etc.

Accordingly, I propose that cross national linguistic distance can not always be studied effectively under the separate headings of linguistic areas, genetic groups, cultural interferential spheres, grammatical or sociolinguistic types, and that a more general concept of linguistic (or communication) UNION be established. By extending Hymes' notion of the 'cognitive style' to all aspects of communicative systems and to all types of distance, we could say that a union is characterised by a relatively uniform 'linguistic' or COMMUNICATIVE STYLE[6]. (Cf. Table 1: Factors in the description of distance).

If the complex character of linguistic distance is to be accounted for, unions must be defined as mutually INCLUSIVE (e.g. European Union - West European Union, East Asian Union - Japan-Korean Union - as noted above, national communities should also be studied as unions), and OVERLAPPING entities (German being a member of both the West European and Central European Unions). It must also be acknowledged that several unions may cooccur within one linguistic community. For instance, in Australia at least the following unions cooccur: European English (including Australian, British etc.), Continental European (including Southern, Central, Eastern etc.), and Aboriginal Australian.

Table 1 : Factors in the description of distance

Level of communicative competence	Type of constraints	Grouping of varieties	
		Characterized by a single type of constraints	Characterized by several types of constraints
1. Central-grammatical (also 'language' or langue)	1. genetic	genetic group (genetic type[1])	
2. Peripheral - speech	2. interferential	interferential sphere (interferential type)	
3. Peripheral - nonverbal	3. areal	area (areal type)	union (communicative style)
	4. typological	typological group (grammatical type)	
	5. sociolinguistic	sociolinguistic group (sociolinguistic type)	
	6. accidental		

[1] Terms in brackets are those for configuartions of features characterizing the group of varieties.

There are CLEAR unions, characterized by a large number of isoglosses, and unions with a lesser degree of clarity (e.g. the Eurasian union). A union has its CENTRE and PERIPHERY (Neustupný 1966b), a feature noticed for areas already by Jakobson, Becker, Ivić and Birnbaum.

Finally, a union may be INSTRUMENTAL in varying degrees, according to whether similarities serve or contradict communication needs. Western Europe seems to be a highly instrumental union in this sense, while the contemporary Balkan does not.

The usefulness of the suggested model of distance can be exemplified at least in four directions.
First, while studying INTELLIGIBILITY, the cooccurence of all types of constraints on distance, (interferential, areal, sociolinguistic, etc.) must be taken into account, and particularly all levels of the 'communicative competence' (not only syntax, lexicon, and phonology, but also more peripheral sub-systems) must be considered.

Secondly, the degree of distance between unions (and communicative styles) may constitute major 'LANGUAGE' PROBLEMS. For instance, multilingualism presents completely different problems according to whether it implies crossing major inter-union boundaries or not. M. Clyne (forthcoming) has reported problems encountered by German immigrants (members of the Central European Union) in Australia with regard to certain routines (shop leasing, agreements etc.) As far as the knowledge of foreign languages in Japan is concerned, the problem has to be reconsidered from the point of view of all levels of 'communicative competence' (the differences in the peripheral parts of communicative competence - e.g., network rules, channel rules etc. - being more decisive than the purely grammatical ones, cf. Neustupný 1969), and all types of distance (distance between Japanese and English, French etc. being enormous with regard to all types).

Thirdly, no 'CONTRASTIVE' LINGUISTICS, whatever its sense may be (cf. Jernudd and Lindau 1971), can reach systematicity unless it builds on a comprehensive theory of linguistic distance.

Finally, it seems that radical and comprehensive differences in communicative style imply the necessity of different APPROACHES to models of the systems. 'Romance linguistics', for instance, is not merely a diachronical notion and can be given very concrete synchronic content.[10] And the way Kazazis (1967) treated the Balkan Sprachbund may prove a significant stimulus for more successful attempts in similar direction.

CONCLUSIONS.

The study of linguistic distance should be developed not merely for the centre of communicative competence but also for its more peripheral parts. From a synchronic point of view, several types of constraints on distance can be distinguished. When they cooccur, we can speak of a linguistic union, characterized by a uniform communicative style (cf. Table 1).

Future research in linguistic distance will undoubtedly confirm the obvious fact that provided all levels and types of distance are considered, linguistic discontinuity in contiguous geographical regions is an extremely rare phenomenon; and that inter-community (socio)linguistics represents an extremely varied and remunerative field for further investigation.

FOOTNOTES

[1] The author is grateful to B. H. Jernudd and H. G. Clyne for valuable comments and suggestions.

[2] Historical comparative linguistics and lexicostatistics, linguistic typology, studies of language contact, semi communication (Haugen 1966) and intelligibility (e.g. Wolff 1959, recently Sankoff 1969) being notable but mutually isolated exceptions. Cf. Hymes (ed.) 1964:567 et sequ.

[3] For Kroeber's contribution see Hymes 1961b.700; cf. also Jespersen 1922:214-215. It seems however that first acknowledgement of the Balkanic Sprachbund goes back to the first half of the 19th century (Kopitar, Schleicher, Miklosich, cf. Sandfeld 1930:11-13).

[4] For bibliography, mainly on the Balkanic Sprachbund, see Hymes (ed.) 1964:651-653, Birnbaum 1968 and 1970. Some additional items are: Halliday 1956, Ivić 1966-1967, Polák 1949, Schröpfer 1956, Skalička 1934, Skalička 1935, Thèses 1929.

[5] For older references see Hymes (ed.) 1964.651. Cf also Garvin 1949, Birnbaum 1968, 1970, and Afendras 1968.

[6] Areal should not be interpreted simply as 'geographically contiguous' : it is social contiguity, degree of contact, not merely the geographical location which matters.

[7] Consistent representative of this typology in structural linguistics has been V. Skalička (1935, 1966 etc.) Cf. also J. Greenberg : 'In all these cases, then, we have a clustering of certain combinations of attributes while for others few or no languages exist which exhibit the combinations in question. In such instances a few salient

types may emerge by a process discussed by Lazarsfeld under the name of reduction.' (Greenberg 1957:77)
Hymes''typology of cognitive styles' (1961a) also seems to belong to this group.

8 Further investigation might however show the affinity as simultaneously areal. If there is a Chinese-Thai-Malay area (with Thai being 'in between' Chinese and Malay, and Tibetan, Mon-Khmer etc. as other members of the group - cf. Halliday 1956), then the resemblances between the Japanese-Korean Area and the Indian Area (Emeneau 1956) obviously correlate with their similar position vis-à-vis this Sino-Malayan wedge and the Eurasian Sprachbund.

9 In other words, communicative style represents a bundle of isoglosses, while a union is a group of varieties (in a traditional terminology we might say dialect ≤ language ≤ union).

10 Future development in this field will undoubtedly build on E. Klima's (1964) suggestion of one grammar with extensions for each variety to account for phenomena specific for that variety. It seems to me that the establishment of one common set of rules for a group of varieties corresponds in the field of inter-community (socio)linguistics to the search for what I would call genetic, interferential, areal, grammatical, or sociolinguistic type, and for the communicative style of a union (cf. Table 1 above). The establishment of the types and styles is significant also in view of the fact that a type or style may include one or several common denominator rules which in their turn may strongly influence the dynamic equilibrium within the system (e.g. the agglutination rule reinforcing agglutinative trends in the system etc.).

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